



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner

DATE: September 4, 2009

SUBJECT: President's Speech to Students on September 8th

Some of Connecticut's school districts have been receiving calls from parents and others about the upcoming Web-based speech that President Barack Obama plans to deliver to the nation's students at noon on Tuesday, September 8. The U.S. Department of Education has asked school districts to participate in the broadcast and provide access to students during this historic event.

Administrators have asked for guidance on how to respond to parents and also how they can appropriately include this event in the school day.

Many of the calls from parents stem from cable news and conservative radio characterizations of the speech as "socialist" or "Nazi-like propaganda" suggesting that the President is "attempting mind control of your children." This is truly unfortunate, inaccurate and clearly goes beyond the definition of responsible civil discourse.

We have reviewed materials relating to the President's speech and can report that the major themes of his address are consistent with messages delivered to the nation's young people from previous Presidents – Republican and Democrat – focusing on the importance of staying in school, working hard, taking responsibility for your learning, graduating and going on to higher education.

The State Department of Education believes the issues being debated are a local matter and the responsibility of local boards of education to decide what course of action to follow. Please give every consideration to providing access to your students in a way that you deem most appropriate to your school schedule and provides due respect to the Office of the President.

I have included a link to an article in the Hartford Courant that addresses this issue:

<http://www.courant.com/news/education/hc-obama-speech-0904.artsep04,0,3843813.story>